

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a plaid shirt, stands with his arms crossed in front of a large, arched high tunnel structure. The interior of the tunnel is filled with green plants.

California

High Tunnels

Natural Resources Conservation Service
USDA
2014 Farm Bill Conservation Programs



OVERVIEW

The Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to install a high tunnel, also known as a hoop house. The goal of the initiative is to assist producers to extend the growing season for high value crops in an environmentally safe manner.

CONSERVATION

High tunnels can extend the growing season and allow for lengthened local marketing of quality produce. Local marketing increases sustainability while lowering energy and transportation inputs thus helping to reduce a farm's carbon footprint. In arid climates, high tunnels may slow evaporation and decrease irrigated water use. In all cases, the tunnels may improve pest and nutrient management.

High tunnels have applicability to all farms, but the extended growing season and steady income may offer advantages to small, limited resource, and organic farmers.

CONSERVATION PLANNING

High tunnels are greenhouse-like structures that modify the growing climate. This modification allows for tender and sensitive crops, like certain varieties of vegetables, herbs, berries, and others, to grow where they otherwise may not. High tunnels are constructed of metal or plastic bow frames at least 6 feet in height, which are covered with a single layer of polyethylene and designed with many different nonelectrical venting options.

Water runoff from high tunnels can cause erosion, pooling, and other environmental concerns. To address these concerns, conservation practices such as drain structures

for water control, grassed waterways, cover crops or critical area planting may be installed. These additional practices will need to be planned and installed as a condition for the installation of a high tunnel. Additional practices that might be considered as part of a conservation plan include nutrient and pest management, cover crop, and irrigation water management.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial assistance is limited to one high tunnel per operation. Successful applicants will receive approximately half the cost of installing a high tunnel; historically underserved customers can receive 75 or 90 percent of the typical cost of installing a high tunnel.

Beginning farmers and ranchers who served in the U.S. Armed Services will receive an application preference in certain EQIP and Conservation Stewardship Program application funding pools. Please inquire with your local NRCS service center for more information if you are a military veteran.

MORE INFORMATION

For application assistance, additional information on the Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative, and other Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) initiatives, please contact your closest NRCS office.

For more information on NRCS Farm Bill conservation programs, visit:

www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ca/programs/

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